



Goddess Ashwarooda

Santhipriya

Goddess Ashwarooda

Goddess Ashwarooda Devi is incarnate of Goddess Tripurasundari. She reportedly manifested from the noose held by Goddess Tripurasundari. Why was she created? If one wants to know why Goddess Ashwarooda manifested, then you must first read the basic interlinked stories.

Once upon a time, in a Yagna held by Goddess Parvathi's father Daksha, both Goddess Parvathi who was in the form of Goddess Sati and Lord Shiva were insulted; unable to bear the insult, Goddess Sati immolated herself in the sacrificial fire. Keeping the corpse of Goddess Sati over his shoulder enraged Lord Siva ran around the universe performing cosmic dance. In order to pacify his anger and calm him down, Lord Vishnu with his chakrayudha, dismembered the corpse of Goddess Sati into 51 pieces which fell in different parts of the universe; later those spots became Sakthi Peedas with the emergence of Sakthi Devi Temples there. Lord Vishnu's effort helped in subduing the anger of Lord Siva who again sat in tapas; simultaneously Goddess Sati's (Parvathi's) soul too sat in penance in Himalayas seeking reunion with her Lord. Everything happened due to strange act of destiny as ordained by Paramatman.

While on one side those events occurred, Celestials in devaloga were harassed by a Asura King called Soorapadman. The asura king had performed severe penance and received a boon from Lord Shiva that he and

his brothers could only be killed by an offspring of Shiva himself, born without a traditional union.

With the enormous power thus gained by the boons, Soorapadman created havoc in entire Universe including in Devaloga. Unable to bear the torture of Asura Soorapadman Celestials decided to seek the intervention of Lord Vishnu, but he could not be traced anywhere. Therefore, the celestials decided to seek protection from Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva was in deep meditation at the time.

Finding no other means to wake him up, the Celestials sought the help of Kama Deva called Manmatha to awaken Lord Shiva so that they can seek his protection to end their plight. Angered by the act of Manmatha which disturbed his meditation, Lord Shiva opened his third eye and burnt him to ashes. However, when the Celestials owned the responsibility for disturbing the penance of Lord Shiva on them and passionately appealed to him to revive Manmatha, eventually convinced Lord Shiva restored back Manmatha's life. When Lord Shiva restored the life of Manmatha, unfortunately an asura named Bhandasura from the clan of Soorapadman too born out of the ashes.

Once Bhandasura took birth gained a unique boon from Lord Shiva himself that he could only be killed by a woman who was not born from another woman's womb a woman. Thus, he became unconquerable. Soon he too became a King and began to harass the Celestials following the path of Soorapadman; the Celestials had to lead a life of misery as the two Asuras tormented and tortured them endlessly. Already Soorapadman was harassing them, now the second

Asura Bhandasura added up to their misery and therefore they again rushed to Lord Vishnu to save them from the clutches of the Asuric forces.

Lord Vishnu realized that Soorapadman's end will come only after Bhandasura was killed and Bhandasura could be killed only by feminine power. Keeping this in mind, Lord Vishnu advised them to invoke Goddess Parvathi by performing an Agni Homa as she was the source of creation and destruction as well (Goddess Parvathi was considered to be Parasakthi who is believed to have created Lord Brahma, the creator and Lord Siva, the destroyer).

Accordingly, when the Celestials performed a great fire sacrifice called Agni Homa, the penancing soul of Goddess Sati, turned back into her original form of Goddess Parvathi and appeared before the grieving Celestials to hear their grievances. Upon their pleas she created from her divines energies through the Agni, a supreme self shining Goddess who was self illuminated, unparalleled beauty in the universe, possessed six abnormal powers and energy. Thus, from the sacrificial fire, the resplendent form of the supreme Goddess, Lalita Tripurasundari (incarnate of Parasakthi who was Goddess Parvathi herself), manifested. Since she had come out inheriting six abnormal powers and energy, she was called Goddess Tripurasundari, Tri meaning six.

Once she came out, Lord Shiva appeared as Kameswara and married her as ordained. Once Goddess Tripurasundari

married Lord Shiva in the appearance of Kameswara, the Celestials immediately sought the help of Lord Shiva to vanquish Bhandasura. Accepting their plea, when Lord Shiva in turn requested his wife Goddess Tripurasundari to annihilate the Asura she agreed to annihilate him. Before commencing the war, Goddess Tripurasundari pondered over various options as Bhandasura could be killed only by a woman not given birth by another woman from her womb.

She remembered one of the greatest epic battles fought by Lord Siva, in which the earth became his chariot, Mount Meru as bow in Lord Siva's hand, Chandra and Surya as the wheels of his chariot, Lord Vishnu the powerful arrow, Lord Brahma the chariot rider and then finally the four Vedas his powerful horses that pulled the chariot. Lord Siva created a huge army from his radiance and along with Celestial forces created by him he won the war.

The thought gave the right clue and she released from her divine energy rays crores of feminine Celestial forces consisting of Mohinis, Yoginis and Avarna devathas etc. Few important devathas created by her included Anima, Mahima, Brahmi, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Mahendri, Chamundi, Mahalakshmi and other forces to help her in the battle. Goddess Tripurasundari then boarded over Chakra Raja Chariot also called Sri Chakra Vahana, surrounded by lakhs of feminine forces, they again surrounded by elephants and horses which were driven by feminine devathas. This information is seen in the Lalitopakhyana of the Brahmanda Purana and the Lalita Sahasranama.

Simultaneously she also released Sampatkari devi from her radiance who became the captain of the elephant and other animal forces. From Pasa banam (noose) held in her hand, Goddess Ashwarooda emerged followed by crores of cavalry of horses. When she emerged from the fierce powerful rays of Goddess Tripurasundari like flame of fire; she was seen clad in red coloured saree and held a Angusam called 'Dandam'(It literally means a small strong magical stick) in her right hand; her brilliance excelled the sun. Goddess Ashwarooda seated on a giant white horse called Aparajitha, led the cavalier of crores of horses. The power of the Dandam (Angusam) was such that it not only controlled the mind and senses but also absorbed the external energies including crucial five senses of each and everyone when commanded. The Horse which she rode was called Aparajitha meaning invincible and cannot be won-over by anyone.

The war commenced. Bhandasura did not participate in the war initially and sent his brother Durmada to the war front. In the fiercely fought battle, Durmada was killed by Sampatkari Devi. Angered by Durmada's death, Bhandasura immediately dispatched another brother Kurunthan who was an expert in deploying mystical powers to confuse the enemies and defeat them by deceit. Immediately Goddess Tripurasundari too changed her war tactics and sent the captain of cavalier forces, Goddess Ashwarooda who was also Goddess to destroy the illusions. Goddess Ashwarooda immediately mounted over her white horse Aparajita, went to the battle field and attacked asura

Kurunthan. She bore goad, noose, cane and reins in her four hands. The horses in her cavalry belonged to various supreme breeds like vanayuja, kambhoja and kairata, all belonging to Devaloga, hence obediently followed her commands; wearing all the insignia and armor required of a war horse, they charged into the battlefield, making a loud noise. Kurunthan kept on changing his form to confuse her, but, that did not deter Goddess Ashwarooda who too kept on changing her tactics of attack and finally killed him with the special magical Dandam (It literally means a small strong magical stick). What was the significance of the Dandam held by Goddess Ashwarooda? It was capable of sucking away entire senses and strengths of the opponent when deployed. Therefore, she was able to absorb the entire powers of asura Kurunthan -which included his magical, mystic and mind powers, into her Dandam and then killed him effortlessly, while crores of horse mounted forces of Goddess Ashwarooda wiped out the remaining forces fought along with asura Kurunthan.

Next was the turn of Bhandasura who along with huge force consisting of 40 commanders and over crores of asuric soldiers marched to the battle field in a chariot pulled by 1000 lions instead of horses. As said earlier, with a huge army consisting of feminine forces which included Sampatkari devi leading the elephant and other animal forces and Ashwarooda captain of the cavalry, Goddess Tripurasundari boarded on her Sri Chakra chariot and moved on to the war front. The asuras kept on creating blockades to stop the marching forces of Goddess Tripurasundari; she however, created Lord Ganesha there

with the help of Kameswara (Lord Shiva) and removed all obstacles and blockades.

The Goddess Tripurasundari created the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu and destroyed several asuras and demons regenerated by Bhandasura with his unique power. Not to waste much time when Goddess Tripurasundari gave signal to Goddess Ashwarooda, she in turn in lightening speed, absorbed the entire powers of Bhandasura and his forces into her Dandam thus making them ineffective to fight further. The mental, physical and all other senses were completely stripped off by the Dandam of Goddess Ashwarooda, in the next wink of moment the forces of horse cavaliers led by her destroyed entire asuric forces. It also made easy for Goddess Tripurasundari who quickly annihilated asura Bhandasura with ease.

The philosophy behind the above story

What is the philosophy behind this story? Only because Goddess Ashwarooda sucked the five senses and mind power of asura Bhandasura leaving no room for him to think, it became easier for Goddess Tripurasundari to annihilate the asura. However, only the physical body of Bhandasura was annihilated by Goddess Tripurasundari since Goddess Ashwarooda had already absorbed all his senses along with his athman (soul) into her Dandam (Angusam) making him mentally dead, but left his body physically alive for a moment to be killed by Tripurasundari. A soul gets birth from Goddess Parasakthi and in the end merges into her when the soul exits the body. Goddess

Parasakthi created Bhandasura and gave him the five senses; when destined time for his end came, she took back his five senses through her other incarnation, Goddess Ashwarooda Devi, and then destroyed the physical body through her other incarnation Goddess Tripurasundari.

The second philosophy is how to reach the highest level of liberation. When asura Bhandasura's senses and mind power ceased to act, he stood still with no motion of acts, wink of an eye, before he turned into a corpse and faced death at the hands of a Goddess who created him. This is a form of merger with the divine at the end of one's life. Similar to the act of merger of Bhandasura with divine, through the cessation of five senses and mind power which cause worldly attachment, desire, and ignorance, one can attain liberation or wisdom and understand the permanent truth or reality. The sadhaka should first achieve self mastery over all the senses within, free himself from the turmoil of emotions and desires, annihilate all impulses, and push his mind to the point of stillness similar to state of Bhandasura, when his desire will get fulfilled. There Bhandasura met death by destruction of his physical body and merged with divine, here the sadhaka causes death of his senses and enter into the divine land of tranquillity, ultimately to merge with the divine at destined time later, slightly different in reality.

The third philosophy in this story is to reveal to the universe that Goddess Ashwarooda, is the controller of senses and mind power. Had Dakshya Yagya been not performed, both Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvathi would

not have gone on tapas. Unless Lord Shiva sat on tapas and his tapas disturbed by Manmatha, he would not have burnt Manmatha to ashes. Unless Manmatha was revived from the ashes, Asura Bhandasura would not have born from the same ashes. Unless Bhandasura was born, Goddess Tripurasundari would not have manifested. Unless Goddess Parvathi broke up her tapas to help the celestials, Goddess Tripurasundari would not have appeared and unless Tripurasundari was sent to annihilate Bhandasura, Goddess Ashwarooda would not have manifested. This is what was told in the beginning that several stories were woven one within the other in the manifestation of Goddess Ashwarooda.

The greatness of Goddess Ashwarooda

Lalithopakyanam consisting of 40 chapters is a scripture within Brahmanda Purana which contains the greatness of Goddess Tripurasundari. The text describes her birth and her role in defeating the demon Bhandasura etc in detail. It is in the form of a dialogue between the sage Agastya and the deity Hayagriva.

Goddess Ashwarooda's act rendering Bhandasura's thoughts completely inactive before destroying him clearly demonstrated that only Goddess Ashwarooda controls one's senses and thoughts; Goddess Ashwarooda is considered the primary deity for gaining control over the mind, thoughts, and the five senses. As mentioned earlier, Goddess Ashwarooda being associated with gaining control over the mind and senses, a crucial prerequisite for

spiritual awakening and liberation, accepts the prayers of sadhanathviks who sincerely desire to attain enlightenment, and grace them the power of controlling their five senses and wavering mind before starting their sadhana towards enlightenment. This thus makes it clear that the primary goddess to be worshipped by the sadhanathviks who desire liberation is none but Goddess Ashwarooda only. By surrendering to her and worship her with the bija mantras specific to her, she will absorb one's wasteful and wavering energies and senses and allow them to tread spiritually backed peaceful path which is essential in life.

Annihilation of asura Bhandasura is a powerful example to show how when five senses are destroyed, one's mind becomes still and he is unable to think. Bhandasura represents the embodiment of unbridled sensory desires and worldly attachments that distract the mind from reaching spiritually elevated stages in one's life. Control over the senses and wavering thoughts are the first stage in the journey of spiritual awakening and the pursuit of a tranquil life; however, they do not necessarily require physical desertion of family or worldly life. One can certainly pursue spiritual life while actively participating in family and society, an inclusive life by reining in the senses. She being remover of internal and external obstacles and negative influences in a devotee's life, worship of Goddess Ashwarooda will give strength to gain control over the senses and the wandering mind. Therefore, one can certainly surrender at the feet of Goddess Ashwarooda and pursue her worship so that their life will turn more peaceful.

After the episode of Bhandasura's annihilation, it became custom to the Emperors and Kings who desired to annex their neighbourly Kingdoms, to perform Ashvamedha Yagna. The ritual involved offering prayers to Goddess Ashwarooda, release a consecrated horse tied with their state flag and a Dandam to roam freely in the territories of neighborly Kingdoms. If the ruler in that state captured the horse, it was a declaration of war, while those who allowed it to pass through their land acknowledged the king's supremacy.

In the initial periods of time, those Kings who performed the Ashvamedha Yagna believed that the rod with Yagna flag tied to the horse will absorb the strength of their enemies to pave way for their surrender like how Bhandasura's end came. Some of the pundits aver that initially the Ashvamedha Yagna was known as Ashwarooda Yagna and over a period of time the Yagna underwent several changes with additional rituals and came to be called Ashvamedha Yagna meaning Yagna by horse sacrifice. Ashwa meant horse. Goddess Ashwarooda's worship gives benefits such as wealth, prosperity in life, and success in endeavours besides spiritual growth which show them the path to wisdom and liberation.

Aspects and appearance of Goddess Ashwarooda

A few pundits accept Goddess Ashwarooda to be an indication of Goddess Durga, while others consider her to

be incarnate of Goddess Parvati Devi. But everyone fails to realize that all feminine goddesses were in one way or the other incarnates of only Goddess Parasakthi who appeared in different appearances or forms; only from those forms emanated all other feminine divines in different forms and appearances. Ultimately the point of emanation of feminine Goddesses were only from Goddess Parasakthi and therefore, no confusion be needed, be sure that Goddess Ashwarooda is one among the numerous incarnations of Goddess Parashakthi.

It is generally believed that Goddess Ashwarooda emanated from the Noose, or rope of Goddess Tripurasundari, also known as Goddess Lalithambigai during her war with Bhandasura. In Lalitha Sahasranama Namavali, out of 1000 names attributed to Goddess Lalithambigai, the name of Goddess Ashwarooda is seen in serial no 67. It is mentioned as "Ashwaroodadishidaswa Kodi Kodi biruvrutha" meaning the Goddess who is surrounded by crores and crores of cavalry of horses.

Goddess Ashwarooda is depicted as having four hands; one in them hold pasham (noose or rope) which represents control over desires; in the second, a goad (a pointed weapon made of some metal-Angusa) which represents power to guide and remove obstacles; in the third, a small whip (in some texts it is cane) which represents control on everything and in the fourth reins of horses which represents mastery over mind and thoughts; she is always seen clad in red colored saree. Some say that the face of Goddess Ashwarooda resembles that of horse because she

leads the cavalry of horses for Tripurasundari. She has a positive and happy face. She is always seen seated over a pure white horse called Aparajitha.

Ashwarooda prayer mantra

Every day when one can chant the following mantra of Goddess Ashwarooda at least 108 times they are sure to gain control over their mind and senses. They will also get their enemies vanquished in whichever form they may appear.

–Ambika Aanadhinithana Ashwarooda Aparajitha–

The gist of the mantra is :

“Oh, universal mother Ambika, one whose origin is unknown and who is pervading everywhere, I pray to Goddess Ashwarooda, whom you manifested and who is riding the invincible white horse called Aparajitha, to be always with me to bestow strength and clear any obstacles which may come on my way. I also pray her to overpower and channelise my ever-wavering mind so that my life will remain ever peaceful. Oh, Ashwarooda Devi, I take refuge into thee.

Similarly, if the picture of Ashwarooda Devi is kept hung at the entrance of home no evil forces can dare to enter the home as their energy and power will get absorbed into her Dandam (Angusam) held in her hand. Even if the evil forces enter home, they will remain powerless to harm the inmates.

For some unknown reasons the ages old practice of performing Ashwarooda Homa was on the wane for some centuries, once again it has begun to resurface in many parts of the country. It is stated that Ashwarooda Homa is being performed in Vaikom Mahadeva Temple in Trichur in Kerala. Her sculpture made of wood is reportedly found in the Thuravoor Narasimha Swami Temple and Kaviyoor Temple.



Author

Born in the year 1945 in Tamilnadu, and basically a Printing Technologist, I served in various Central Govt organizations such as Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) under the then Ministry of Scientific affairs, Govt of India; Bank Note Press, Ministry of Finance, Dept of Economic Affairs, Govt of India, Dewas, engaged in the printing of Bank Notes and Currencies, before finally superannuated in the capacity of a senior official in the year 2005. After retirement I worked in the capacity of a Consultant in Security Printing; obtained a Patent on new technique for numbering of currencies and participated in an international conference in Hongkong as a special invitee to present a paper on counterfeiting menace.

Under the Pen name 'SANTHIPRIYA', I am pursuing the art of writing; have written over 1500 spiritual articles in English and Tamil covering several Temples, Mahans and other historical stories connected to spiritual world and published them in my own website <https://pages.santhipriya.com/>.

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